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SUBJECT: JAPANESE MORNING PRESS HIGHLIGHTS 04/28/08

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3) Prime Minister's Official Residence (Kantei)

Prime Minister's schedule, April 25

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
April 26, 2008

08:31
Attended a cabinet meeting in Diet.

08:54
Met with Cabinet Intelligence Director Mitani at Kantei.

10:15
Met with Chief Cabinet Secretary Machimura.

10:33
Arrived at Kantei residence.

12:24

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Left Haneda Airport aboard a government plane to visit Russia.

Local time

Evening
Arrived at Vnukovo Airport in Moscow, Russia. Stayed at Hotel Metropole

Prime Minister's schedule, April 26

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
April 27, 2008

Morning
Visited the Japanese Language Education Festival held at 1535 School in a suburb of Moscow. Responded to interviews with Russian press companies, including Itar-Tass.

Noon
Met with reporters accompanying him at Hotel Metropole.

Afternoon
Met with President Putin at the president's residence. Attended a working lunch with Putin. Met with president-elect Medvedev at the President's Guest House.

Evening
Arrived at Hotel Metropole.

Prime Minister's schedule, April 26 & 27

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
April 28, 2008

Night
Left Vnukovo Airport in Moscow aboard a government plane.
April 27

12:10
Arrived at Haneda Airport.

12:42
Made a return home report at Imperial Palace.

12:56
Met with Machimura at Kantei residence.

21:54
Met with LDP Secretary General Ibuki.

4) DPJ overwhelmingly wins Lower House by-election in Yamaguchi

Prefecture

ASAHI (Top Play) (Lead excerpts)
April 28, 2008

The main opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) yesterday overwhelmingly won a House of Representative seat in the Yamaguchi No. 2 district by-election, recapturing the seat from the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). During the election campaign, issues that mainly attracted attention were the newly introduced health insurance system for people aged 75 and over and the government's

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road policy. The government and ruling parties will reinstate on April 30 provisional gasoline tax rates in the Lower House by resorting to an overriding vote. The DPJ, however, intends to put up do-or-die resistance and it has now launch coordination on the timing for submitting a censure motion against Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda with an eye also on the political situation in May.

In Sunday's Lower House by-election, DPJ candidate Hideo Hiraoka, 54, a former Lower House member elected under the proportional representation electoral system, who was recommended by the small opposition party, the Social Democratic Party (SDP), defeated LDP candidate Shigetaro Yamamoto, 59, a former official of the Land, Infrastructure and Transport Ministry, who was recommended by the New Komeito, the LDP's coalition partner. Hiraoka received about 20,000 more votes than Yamamoto. Voter turnout was 69 PERCENT (72.45 PERCENT in the previous general election), with 308,017 voters going to the polling stations. The by-election took place to fill a seat that had fallen vacant after Yoshihiko Fukuda of the LDP, who had defeated Hiraoka in the 2005 general election, ran for the Iwakuni mayoral election, after quitting his Lower House seat. The Japanese Communist Party did not field its own candidate, leaving the LDP and DPJ candidates to battle it out.

Hiraoka attacked the government and ruling coalition over their road-construction policy, the pension-records mess, and the controversial health care system for the elderly. The government began withholding medical insurance premiums from the pension benefits of those 75 and over on April 15, when the official campaign for the Lower House by-election kicked off. This became driving force for Hiraoka's campaign. The fact that the government and ruling camp decided on a policy of reinstating the provisional tax rates immediately before the election day appears to have invited a backlash from voters.

5) LDP candidate's loss in Lower House by-election to deal blow to Prime Minister Fukuda, with DPJ stepping up offensive

ASAHI (Page 1) (Excerpts)
April 28, 2008

Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda (president of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party) has suffered a blow with the LDP candidate losing the House of Representatives by-election in Yamaguchi Prefecture, the first national election since Fukuda took office. Since his grip on the party will now unavoidably be weakened, the prime minister will find it more difficult to manage his administration. The government and ruling parties will likely be forced to review their political scenario as to when the next general election should be held and under whose leadership.

Many in the ruling coalition believe that the new health care system for the elderly was the main reason for the loss. As the government started withholding medical insurance premiums from the pension benefits of those 75 and over on April 15, when the official campaign for the Lower House by-election kicked off, voters became increasingly distrustful of the government and ruling camp. LDP Policy Research Council Chairman Sadakazu Tanigaki has said that it is impossible to change drastically the policy direction, but a former party executive said: "Unless we revise the system, we will not be able to win future elections." The opposition camp intends to gear up to go on the offensive, calling for scrapping the system.

LDP Diet Affairs Committee Chairman Tadamori Oshima said: "There is no change in our policy of taking an overriding vote on April 30 in the Lower House" on a tax system-related bill regardless of what the election outcome was. The government and ruling camp plan to readopt on May 12 also a bill amending the Road Construction Revenues Special Exemption Law in the Lower House. However, some junior and mid-level lawmakers may criticize it, saying that taking an overriding vote on the bill amending the special exemption law contradicts the prime minister's policy.

Fukuda and Chief Cabinet Secretary Nobutaka Machimura confirmed on April 27 that they would decide in a cabinet meeting on the policy of integrating the special account from road-related tax revenues into the general account budget starting in fiscal 2009. Fukuda will meet today with New Komeito leader Akihiro Ota. He will then explain to the public specific measures for the shifting the special road-related revenues to the general account in a press conference after the overriding vote is taken on April 30.

6) DPJ gains momentum with victory in Yamaguchi by-election: "We have the will of the people"

SANKEI (Page 2) (Excerpts)
April 28, 2008

The Democratic Party of Japan's (DPJ) candidate won a House of Representatives seat in the Yamaguchi Constituency No.2 by-election yesterday, which marked the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the DPJ. The victory is likely to boost President Ichiro Ozawa's strong hold on the party. Diet Affairs Committee Chairman Kenji Yamaoka said: "We won a one-on-one fight. An overwhelming number of people now rest their hopes on our party. The election result shows that this is the beginning of the end of the Liberal Democratic Party's reign." The main opposition party is now poised to underscore a confrontational stance toward the Fukuda administration, interpreting the victory in the by-election as the voters' support for its views in debates with the LDP over the provisional gasoline tax rate and the use of road-related tax revenues for general spending, as well as its call for abolishing the new health insurance system for people aged 75 or older.

In a party executive meeting this afternoon, the DPJ will decide not to submit a censure motion against Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda immediately after the LDP takes an override vote in the House of Representatives scheduled for April 30 to revive the provisional tax rates. Although the DPJ won the by-election, the party has yet to determine the best timing for submitting a censure motion. The main opposition intends to pour its energy into attacking the government and the ruling coalition in the Diet session for the time being.

The DPJ is now very self-confident. Diet Affairs Committee Chairman Yamaoka told reporters last night: "The government and the ruling coalition should take the election result seriously and immediately drop the health insurance system for people aged 75 or older. They also should withdraw their plan to take an override vote in the Lower House on the 30th to raise gasoline prices, because they expressed their opposition to it."

Secretary General Yukio Hatoyama proudly said in a press conference

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last night: "We have come closer to launching an Ozawa government." He added: "We now have more options in hand (to corner the Fukuda administration). We will pursue the government and the ruling camp

in the Diet over the health insurance system for very old patients, the pension record-keeping fiasco, and the issue of road-related taxes. While keeping in mind the possibility of submitting a censure motion at the best timing, we will take action."

6-2) LDP suffers blow from defeat in Yamauchi by-election but still intends to hold override revote on tax revenues-related bills

The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) candidate was crushingly defeated in the by-election in Yamaguchi 2nd District for a House of Representatives seat yesterday, dealing a fresh blow to the LDP. But the party still intends to hold a revote at the Lower House on April 30 over bills related to tax revenues. The LDP, however, is likely to fail to present a united front. The party leadership may be pressured to make a difficult response.

Election Committee Chairman Makoto Koga and other LDP executives arrived at party headquarters one after another a little past 19:30, when the defeat of the LDP candidate became almost certain through exit polls by news companies. Secretary General Bunmei Ibuki showed up few minutes after 20:00. NHK had just reported the LDP candidate's defeat.

Ibuki grumbled with a serious look: "The responsibility does not lie only with Mr. Koga," and he then entered his office with Koga and others. Appearing before reporters again before 22:00, Ibuki said that the main reason for the defeat was "a lack of sufficient, appropriate explanation about the new health insurance system for people aged 75 or older."

All senior members of the LDP and the New Komeito attributed the defeat to the new health insurance system in an apparent attempt to throw the blame on former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, who had decided to introduce the new system.

Some LDP members attributed responsibility to the media. Ibuki emphasized: "(The media) reported on the system in a distorted way. That was the main cause of our defeat." Chief Cabinet Secretary Nobutaka Machimura also commented: "Biased reporting also was one of the key factors." Koga said: "The margin is within what we had expected. I think there will be no effect on national politics."

Even under such circumstances, it is impossible for the LDP to put off a revote on the tax revenues-related bill. A mid-ranking official was overheard saying in a tone of self-mockery: "Let's leave a matter to chance."

7) Exit poll: 70 PERCENT of unaffiliated voters cast for Hiraoka

According to an exit poll conducted by Kyodo News of voters in yesterday's by-election for the House of Representatives in Yamaguchi Prefecture's District 2, Hideo Hiraoka, who won the by-election as a candidate from the leading opposition Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto), won over 84.6 PERCENT of votes from those who support the Japanese Communist Party, which gave up on running its own candidate, with only 15.4 PERCENT of them voting

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for the ruling Liberal Democratic Party's Shigetaro Yamamoto.

The JCP is expected to field candidates in about 140 of the nation's 300 single-seat constituencies in the next general election for the House of Representatives. As far as the outcome of the exit poll is concerned, the JCP's election strategy of narrowing down its candidates is highly likely to work to the DPJ's advantage. However, many of the JCP's supporters are also expected to abstain from voting.

In the last election for the lower chamber, ruling ticket candidates and DPJ candidates faced off in 288 electoral districts. To simply add votes won by JCP candidates to those obtained by DPJ candidates, the DPJ outstrips the ruling parties in 44 districts. The JCP has yet to field its own candidates in 16 of these districts.

Hiraoka won over 94.4 PERCENT of votes from DPJ supporters and 70.5 PERCENT of votes from the electorate's voting population with no particular party affiliation. Among LDP supporters, 23.5 PERCENT

also cast their votes for Hiraoka.

Meanwhile, Yamamoto got 76.5 PERCENT of votes from LDP supporters and only 29.5 PERCENT of votes from the unaffiliated voters.

8) Exit poll: Voters concerned about pension, medical care vote for Hiraoka

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Abridged)
April 28, 2008

The Yomiuri Shimbun carried out an exit poll of voters in yesterday's by-election for the House of Representatives in Yamaguchi Prefecture's District 2, in which 38 PERCENT of the electorate were concerned about "pension and medical care" as a campaign issue. Among them, 67 PERCENT voted for Hideo Hiraoka, who won the by-election as the candidate of the leading opposition Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto), with only 29 PERCENT voting for the ruling Liberal Democratic Party's Shigetaro Yamamoto. Voters' dissatisfaction with the government's newly introduced medical care system for the elderly seems to have led to support for Hiraoka.

The LDP and its coalition partner, New Komeito, are going to restore the now-expired provisional gasoline tax rate. The exit poll asked voters if they supported this course of action. In response to this question, 31 PERCENT answered "yes," with 62 PERCENT saying "no." Among those who answered "no," 79 PERCENT voted for Hiraoka. As seen from these figures, a majority of the electorate's voting population were negative about the idea of restoring the provisional gas surcharge. This resulted in boosting votes for Hiraoka.

Among LDP supporters, 72 PERCENT voted for Yamamoto but 25 PERCENT voted for Hiraoka. Among New Komeito supporters, nearly 80 PERCENT voted for Yamamoto, with 21 PERCENT casting their votes for Hiraoka.

Among DPJ supporters, 95 PERCENT voted for Hiraoka.

Among those unaffiliated with any political party, 73 PERCENT voted for Hiraoka, with 21 PERCENT for Yamamoto.

In the by-election this time, the Japanese Communist Party did not

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field its own candidate. More than 90 PERCENT of JCP supporters voted for Hiraoka.

9) Exit poll: 70 PERCENT opposed to gas tax restoration

ASAHI (Page 1) (Abridged)
April 28, 2008

The Asahi Shimbun conducted an exit poll of voters in yesterday's by-election for the House of Representatives in Yamaguchi Prefecture's District 2 to ask if they supported the idea of restoring the now-expired provisional rate of taxation on gasoline for road-related tax revenues, 70 PERCENT of all those polled answered "no," with 25 PERCENT saying "yes." Among those who support the ruling coalition of the Liberal Democratic Party and New Komeito as well, more than 50 PERCENT answered "no." Among those who support the leading opposition Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto), about 90 PERCENT answered "no."

10) Exit poll: 65 PERCENT opposed to restoring provisional gas tax rate

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Full)
April 28, 2008

According to an exit poll conducted by Kyodo News of voters in yesterday's by-election for House of Representatives in Yamaguchi Prefecture's District 2, 65.8 PERCENT were against restoring the now-expired rate of provisional taxation on gasoline, with only 34.2 PERCENT supporting it. The government and the ruling coalition are going to take a vote again on a tax reform bill in the House of

Representatives on Apr. 30 to restore the provisional gas tax rate. However, the results of the by-elections show that many of the voters have rejected the plan to take a second vote to restore the provisional gas tax rate.

The leading opposition Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto) has been insisting on abolishing the provisional gas tax rate. Among its supporters, 84.3 PERCENT answered "no" when asked if they supported the idea of restoring the provisional gas tax rate, with 15.7 PERCENT saying "yes." Among the supporters of other parties, "no" came from 83.3 PERCENT of those who support the Japanese Communist Party and from 62.5 PERCENT from those who support the Social Democratic Party.

Meanwhile, the ruling coalition of the Liberal Democratic Party and New Komeito is insisting on restoring the provisional gas tax rate. Among LDP supporters, 53.0 PERCENT answered "yes," with 47.0 PERCENT saying "no." Among New Komeito supporters, "no" came from 61.0 PERCENT.

Among those with no particular party affiliation, 76.1 PERCENT answered "no," with 23.9 PERCENT saying "yes." According to the exit poll, 70.5 PERCENT of the unaffiliated voters cast their votes for the DPJ's Hideo Hiraoka, who won the by-election. Their opposition to restoring the provisional gas tax rate backed him.

11) Prime Minister Fukuda says there will be no cabinet reshuffle at an early date

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
April 27, 2008

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Shin Nakayama, Moscow

Visiting Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda met with reporters accompanying him in a Moscow hotel at noon of April 26 (evening of the same day, Japan time). When asked about a cabinet reshuffle, which some in the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) are calling for, Fukuda expressly rejected it, noting, "I am not thinking about it." Asked how he would deal with a case where a censure motion against the prime minister is adopted in the Upper House by a majority of votes from the major opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) and other opposition parties, Fukuda said: "I'll make a decision at the time. It will depend on a political situation at the time." At the same time he noted: "Given that the ruling bloc fails to hold a majority in the Upper House, there will be great meaning in (the censure motion)."

Some in the ruling parties are voicing the need to reshuffle the cabinet even before the Group of Eight (G-8) Toyako Summit in July in order to boost his cabinet as its approval ratings have been hovering at low levels. When asked about his views of a cabinet reshuffle, Fukuda said, "I can't answer a hypothetical question," making it clear that he has no intention of reshuffling the cabinet for the present.

A bill amending the Special Taxation Measures Law is now expected to be readopted in the Lower House on April 30. Speaking of this outlook, Fukuda emphasized: "For what purpose does the Upper House exist?" Its' raison d'etre will be questioned. Isn't it that it exists to come out with a conclusion?" Fukuda rapped the DPJ, which is trying to delay taking a vote on the bill in the Upper House. DPJ President Ichiro Ozawa has been calling for an early dissolution of the Lower House for a snap election. Referring to this call, Fukuda noted: "I hear a variety of views exist in the DPJ."

12) U.S. Ambassador to Japan in meetings with foreign minister, chief cabinet secretary says North Korea, Syria nuclear "still continue nuclear cooperation"

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Full)
April 26, 2008

U.S. Ambassador to Japan Schieffer on April 25 met with Chief

Cabinet Secretary Machimura and Foreign Minister Koumura in succession to brief them on the U.S. government's announcement on April 24 that North Korea and Syria are engaging in nuclear cooperation. After the meeting, Foreign Minister Koumura revealed the contents of the briefing from the Ambassador, who had said, "(Nuclear cooperation between North Korea and Syria) continues today." In addition, the foreign minister told the press corps: "North Korea has no choice but to admit the truth (with evidence of nuclear cooperation), and we will press the North to report on this issue."

In the two meetings, Japan and the United States reconfirmed their intention to cooperate in pressing the North "for a full and accurate report of its nuclear programs."

A senior Foreign Ministry official, commenting on the U.S. statement, gave this assessment: "With this, it has become impossible for the U.S. to easily remove North Korea from the list of states sponsoring terrorism." On the other hand, regarding the

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impact on Six-Party Talks on the North Korean nuclear problem, the official expressed concern: "There also is fear that North Korea now will harden even more its stand, that the stalemate will get even worse."

The government plans to bring up the North Korea-Syria nuclear-cooperation issue at the G-8 Summit at Toyako in July.

13) North Korea's nuclear assistance to Syria: Government insists issue will not harm the Six-Party Talks

MAINICHI (Page 5) (Excerpt)
April 26, 2008

In response to the U.S. government's announcement that North Korea is suspected of providing nuclear technological cooperation to Syria, the government has stressed the enormity of the issue, one senior Foreign Ministry official stating, "This is not a thing of the past; it is serious because it is going on now." However, at the same time, Chief Cabinet Secretary Machimura at a press conference on April 25 said: "It is critical that the (suspected cooperation) be made clear through (the North's) report to the Six-Party Talks." He expressed his view that the issue would not damage the Six-Party Talks.

14) Torch relay in Nagano: Six protesters arrested

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 1) (Abridged)
April 27, 2008

A number of clashes between Chinese supporters and pro-Tibet demonstrators occurred during the Olympics torch relay in Nagano City yesterday, injuring four. Six men were arrested for trying to obstruct the event. Eighty runners ran the 18.7-kilometer course under tight security. The torch arrived at the terminus of the Japanese leg of the Olympic torch relay four hours later, about 15 minutes behind the original schedule.

The last runner, Athens Olympics marathon gold-medalist Mizuki Noguchi, arrived at the Wakasato Park a little past 12:00 and lit the large flame. Noguchi said: "I ran as I wished for peace," adding: "The Olympics is a big event held once every four years. It is regrettable to see the Olympics intertwined with political motives."

Police arrested four on suspicion of forcible obstruction of business and one for violent acts during the relay. Further a 33-year-old company employee from Yokohama was arrested for riotous conduct and violating the Traffic Control Law, while an Asian man was apprehended after trying to charge the torch. Eggs and tomatoes were also thrown.

(Kaname Fukuda, Seoul)

The Olympic torch arrived in Seoul by air in the early morning of

April 27. The about 24-kilometer relay will start in the downtown of Seoul in the afternoon of the same day.

15) China adopts pose of accepting dialogue with the Dalai Lama, setting conditions: Japanese government welcomes it as "fruit of Japan's persuasive efforts"

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YOMIURI (Page 3) (Abridged)
April 26, 2008

The Japanese government has welcomed "as a fruit of Japan's persuasive efforts" the Chinese government's indication that it intends to engage the 14th generation Dalai Lama in dialogue. Foreign Minister Koumura on the evening of April 24 told the press corps: "We hope the dialogue will have substantive meaning and will be successful. Above all, it is a first step (toward progress on the Tibetan problem)."

The government was informed about the dialogue decision around 4:00 pm on April 24 by the Chinese government before the official Xinhua press carried the story. Japan and the United States were informed before European countries were. The predominant view in the government is that the Chinese government gave consideration to the Beijing Olympics' torch being carried through Japan on April 26. If severe protest movements and turmoil occurred, it would cast a dark cloud on the visit to Japan by President Hu Jin Tao, only 10 days later.

Prime Minister Fukuda entrusted a letter to Liberal Democratic Party Secretary General Ibuki addressed to President Hu when Ibuki visited

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Beijing in mid-April. In it, Fukuda urged a dialogue be started with the Dalai Lama. A Japanese government source stressed: "The Prime Minister's message was heard by China's leaders. A good trend has started prior to the Japan visit of President Hu.

16) Japan, Russia agree to explore oil and gas fields in Siberia, advance Northern Territories talks

YOMIURI (Top play) (Excerpts)
April 27, 2008

Tatsuya Fukumoto, Moscow

Prime Minister Fukuda on the afternoon of April 26 (night of the same day, Japan time) met with Russian President Putin at the presidential residence in the outskirts of Moscow. The two leaders agreed to move talks on the Northern Territories issue forward. They also decided to implement bilateral cooperation in the areas of energy, transportation, and the environment. As part of energy cooperation, the Japan Oil, Gas and Metals National Corporation (JOGMEG) is scheduled to embark on an exploration of oil and gas fields in Siberia in cooperation with Irkutsk Oil Company, a Russian private-sector firm.

The first summit meeting between Fukuda and Putin lasted for some two hours including a lunch. Japan and Russia last summit was between Prime Minister Abe and Putin in Sydney last September.

On the Northern Territories issue, Fukuda noted: "In order to upgrade Japan-Russia relations to a higher level, I think it is essential to have concrete progress bilateral negotiations." In response, Putin said: "Based on the result of the past negotiations, I want to promote talks. In order to advance the talks, I want to expand bilateral ties overall. Whatever may occur in internal affairs, I will continue the talks." The two leaders decided that the two countries would continue talks with the aim of seeking to reach a resolution, and that they would instruct their respective foreign affairs officials to promote negotiations.

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17) Japan-Russia summit

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
April 27, 2008

The following are major views exchanged between Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda and President Putin.

Northern Territories issue

Fukuda: I think it is essential to move negotiations forward in concrete terms in order to upgrade Japan-Russia relations to a higher level.

Putin: I am aware of the difficulties the two countries are facing. Based on the results of the past talks, I will continue talks from now on as well. In order to make progress on the talks, I want to advance bilateral ties overall.

Japan-Russia cooperation

Both leaders agreed to strengthen cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region while promoting reciprocal cooperation in a broad range of areas.

Climate change

Both leaders agreed to work together to create a new framework to prevent global warming.

Putin: It is important for China, India, and the United States to take part in (a post-Kyoto framework). Russia is willing to work together in this regard.

North Korea issue

Fukuda: (The nuclear issue) has reached a difficult phase. I think it is necessary for the six-party talks to pressure North Korea to come out with the whole truth about its nuclear programs.

Putin: Let's work together in the six-party talks from now on as well. I will cooperate on dealing with the abduction issue.

Exchanges of leaders

Fukuda: I hope you will visit Japan even after you step down from your post.

Putin: I love Japan. It would be a pleasure to visit your country.

18) Russian president indicates cooperation to move the abduction issue forward

SANKEI (Page 1) (Excerpts)
April 27, 2008

Keiichi Takagi, Moscow

Visiting Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda on the afternoon of April 26 (night of the same day, Japan time) met with President Putin, who is to retire from the post on May 7, at the president's residence in a suburb of Moscow. The two leaders agreed to pressure North Korea

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through the six-party talks and other fora to come out with a complete and accurate declaration of its nuclear programs, including its cooperation on nuclear development toward Syria. On the abduction issue, Fukuda told Putin, "I'd like you to exercise your influence on North Korea." In response, Putin said, "I will cooperate."

On talks on a peace treaty, Fukuda said firmly, "It is indispensable to advance the talks," But Putin simply noted, "I will go ahead with the talks from now on as well based on the results of the past negotiations." The two leaders went no further than confirming that

the two countries would continue talks.

19) With Upper House rejection of the sympathy budget, workers' union at U.S. bases react sharply

ASAHI (Page 4) (Excerpts)
April 26, 2008

Although the special measures agreement extending for three years Japan's host-nation support (sympathy budget) for U.S. forces stationed in Japan was adopted in the afternoon by the Lower House under a constitutional provision regarding treaties, that morning, the full session of the Upper House rejected the agreement. This was the first time for both houses not to have approved an international treaty. This was because the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), which until now had approved the special measures agreement, to switch to an opposing vote.

However, in response to the DPJ's opposing stance, Zenchuro, the labor union to which approximately 16,000 Japanese employees of U.S. bases belong, reacted sharply. As a result, Upper House committee chairman Koshiishi of the DPJ visited the labor union's branch in Yamaguchi, prior to the by-election, and handed over a letter from DPJ head Ozawa addressed to the labor union members. The letter apologized for causing "worry and concern" to the union during Diet debate.

SCHIEFFER